

## House Republican Press Release

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### Are you getting gas? Or just “agida”?



*By State Representative John J. Ryan*

The General Assembly Session has been concluded for several weeks now, and maybe you recall that Will Rogers used to say in a former era that "The taxpayers are safe for now, because Congress has adjourned!" And perhaps you will be safe until next year, because most observers agree that the chances of a Special Session (a rare event in the "good old days", but all-too-common in our recent legislative history) are dwindling as each day passes.

This allows us to commence a series of columns on what did and did not happen this year in Hartford, and what more newsworthy issue is there these days than the energy topic? You may have seen some news stories expressing unhappiness by some (including our Attorney General) that so little was done on this topic; you may have seen coverage that shortly after the session ended, a legislative "energy summit" was held with input and viewpoints from assorted "experts." There was even an editorial on Monday ("State must get serious about energy") in one of our local dailies, but did you see any editorial or news coverage on the details of what didn't happen, or why? Of course not! So if you wish to look into the details, and draw some conclusions for yourself, here goes:

- Gasoline zone pricing: The price of gas is about as volatile an issue as you get; maybe you recall all of the press conferences and political posturing that "something would be done"? Well, in fact there was a bill (SB 502 ) that made it through committees and to the Senate floor, where it was amended into its final version and passed the Senate unanimously, and in plenty of time to be taken up by the House. If I may quote the non-partisan Office of Legislative Research (OLR) Bill Analysis Summary, "The bill (1) temporarily bans gasoline producers and refiners from establishing price zones when selling to anyone who sells gasoline at retail in Connecticut; (2) requires producers and refiners to sell gasoline at the 'posted rack price'; and (3) prohibits producers and refiners from discriminating in the posted rack price charged to retail sellers, except for actual delivery charges and discounts or rebates."

In fairness, zone pricing is a pretty complex issue to unravel, but this past weekend I filled up at an Exxon station across the street from Central Connecticut State University. (site of the state Republican convention this year) for \$2.97 per gallon; only 4 miles later, I went past the same brand selling for \$3.16! Since many of you have observed similar price incongruities, I assume you will not be surprised if I tell you

that many Fairfield County House members were considering voting for this bill, but, guess what? SB 502 was **never even called for a vote in the House!**

- Gas tax holiday: you probably didn't hear about this one either; a proposal originated by Rep. Kevin Witkos (from Canton, who was lucky enough to sit next to me in the floor in his freshman term) that would create a gas tax 'holiday' for this summer, analogous to our sales tax free week on clothing in August, which myself and other House Republicans thought was a very promising idea. The tax holiday would cost the State some revenue loss to be sure, but as A) we have a growing surplus and B) this would be direct price relief to consumers, it was at least worth taking up and debating in the Legislature (and you can look up amendments LCO #4859 and 5157, for instance ), but, guess what? **No bill that this amendment was filed on was ever called for a vote in the House!**
- Reducing the gross earnings tax on electric and power companies: Republicans thought this was a good way to create some savings that could be passed onto consumers, so we called an amendment in the House (you can look it up as amendment LCO # 3769 ) on sHB-5689, a bill about electric distribution companies, but the House Majority promptly moved to kill the bill procedurally by a parliamentary technique known as 'passing temporarily', and being aggravated at this move, we actually took a vote on whether or not to temporarily "skip" the bill! (you can look it up, the House vote was at 2:28 p.m. on April 11, and guess how Democrats and Republicans voted, respectively ?) So after sHB-5689 bill 'went away' without ever being voted on, **this bill nor the tax cutting amendment were ever again called for a vote in the House!**

Perhaps you are getting the idea. You can read an editorial with some vapid lines like "the willingness of our state lawmakers and other elected officials to accomplish what's needed for the welfare of Connecticut " or peruse a story that repeats word for word what politicians put into press conferences at gas stations. But another option is to take a moment to track what happens to legislation, (and in some cases, exactly which legislators support and oppose it) and how things (don't) happen. After all, it's your money and your government!

Please feel free to contact me with your concerns and issues. As your state representative, it is my job, and my priority to represent you and to make sure that your needs and concerns are addressed at the capitol. You can write to me at Room 4200, Legislative Office Building, Hartford, CT 06106-1591, send me e-mail at [John.Ryan@housegop.state.ct.us](mailto:John.Ryan@housegop.state.ct.us) or call my office toll-free at 1-800-842-1423.